

# HOT TOPICS: PREVENT CHOKING!

Choking is when someone cannot breathe because food, a toy/object, or other material is stuck inside of the throat. This blocks the airway and stops the person from getting air into their lungs.

## PREVENT CHOKING:

- ☑ Encourage quiet, seated mealtimes
- ☑ Discourage eating while walking, running, playing, lying down or standing
- ☑ Assign a specific staff person or caregiver to monitor each meal or snack
- ☑ Provide plenty of space around members who grab food or objects from others
- ☑ Choose holiday decorations carefully: avoid tinsel, small ornaments, and items that look like candy
- ☑ Monitor members with swallowing problems and/or who eat non-food items
- ☑ Watch for “pocketing” of food (when a person keeps adding food to their mouth without swallowing)
- ☑ Do not allow individuals who are at risk for choking or have swallowing issues to eat alone
- ☑ Discourage eating and drinking while in a moving vehicle
- ☑ Monitor individuals known to swallow non-food items (batteries, bolts, plastics, etc.)
  - Keep the member’s *preferred* non-food items stored *out of sight* and *out of reach*
- ☑ The following are foods that are known to cause choking and should be avoided or served with care
  - Hard Candy      • Hot Dogs/Sausages      • Popcorn
  - Nuts & Seeds      • Chunks of Peanut Butter      • Chewing Gum
  - Sticky Foods (marshmallows, fruit roll-ups, gel candy, etc.)

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHOKING:

- ☑ *Universal sign for choking*: one or both hands at the neck area; unable to talk or cough
- ☑ Inability to talk or breathe
- ☑ Forceful coughing; wheezing and difficulty breathing
- ☑ Lack of alertness or unconsciousness • **Call 9-1-1 immediately!**
- ☑ Pale or bluish color to lips and/or nails • **Call 9-1-1 immediately!**

Call or have someone call 9-1-1 immediately  
before any other call/action when choking is suspected.



## VENDOR ACTION ITEMS:

- ☑ Ensure all staff and caregivers call 9-1-1 *FIRST* when choking is suspected
- ☑ Confirm all staff is current on CPR and First Aid Training and Certification (maintain files)
- ☑ Do not schedule other activities during mealtimes; a chaotic mealtime is a safety hazard
- ☑ Have a PLAN for:
  - Monitoring each and every meal and/or snack (assign specific staff)
  - Establishing calm “seated” mealtimes (post mealtime rules)
  - Supervision of individuals at risk for choking or who have swallowing issues
  - Supervision of individuals who eat or swallow non-food items and objects
- ☑ Schedule a choking prevention presentation

The Division of Developmental Disabilities has declared November Choking Prevention Awareness Month.

A presentation providing general information to prevent and address choking events is available.

Call (602-771-8129) or email ([dtasev@azdes.gov](mailto:dtasev@azdes.gov)) to schedule your on-site presentation today!

The content of this presentation is not intended as a substitute for CPR/First Aid Training and/or medical care.